Construction of Railway Line

968. SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government had conducted a survey in 1990-91 to link the border of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh via Agra, Fatehabad and Baha, Jaitpur, Udimore and Etawah with rail line;

(b) if so, the progress made in laying this rail line so far; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government to expedite the completion of this rail line and the reasons for delay in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) This is not an approved work.

(c) Does not arise.

[English]

Recovery of Dues by MTNL

969. SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hardoi) : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government have been drawn to the news item captioned "MTNL is going slow on recovery of dues" appearing in the Times of India dated February 7, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) whether Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited purchased an obsolete technology - "PDH" when the world over SDH is being bought;

(d) whether the MTNL also purchased/procured costly equipment far in excess of the requirements and a major part of those are lying unused;

(e) if so, the action taken against the officials responsible therefor; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The facts are given in the Statement enclosed.

(c) PDH technology is not obsolete.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f). Question does not arise in view of (c) and (d) above.

STATEMENT

The facts are as follows :

MTNL placed orders for 234 nos. of 140 Mbps and 4 nos. of 565 Mbps OFC equipment on nine different vendors based on an open tender during the period May to October, 1994. Since there was one tender for OFC equipment also floated around the same time by DOT, while placing POs by MTNL on its tender the provisional rates were offered with the special condition that in case prices fixed by DOT for "exactly similar configuration" equipment are lower, same shall be applicable against MTNL POs. This extra clause was incorporated to safe-guard the interest of MTNL. The DOT fixed-prices were 30 to 40 percent lower than the MTNL's provisional rates and the major price difference was due to one particular item, namely, DDF. Based on the rates fixed by DOT, MTNL regulated the payment to the suppliers from time to time and fixed prices against provisional rates in September, 1995. The suppliers challenged the price fixation by MTNL as according to them, the equipment ordered by MTNL and DOT were not identical. It may however, be mentioned here that DOT did not get supply of this item at all from any of its approved suppliers and ultimately cancelled the orders and invoked the performance bank guarantees of the erring supplier. MTNL took legal advice from Additional Solicitor General of India, acted immediately thereafter and ordered due recoveries. In the process MTNL ordered invokation of Bank Guarantees furnished by the concerned suppliers and same has been challenged by the suppliers in the Court. The recovery amount comes to Rs. 2.46 crores only and not Rs. 9 crores as raised in the press clippings.

2. The suppliers have, however, contested the price fixation by MTNL and one of the suppliers has sought for arbitration. Indian Council of Arbitration (ICAR) has already nominated two former Chief Justices of India as Arbitrators and arbitration proceedings are to commence shortly.

Satellite Channel

970. SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to regulate the Satellite Channels including Direct to Home Service;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c). A broadcasting Bill is proposed to be introduced in the current session of Parliament for effective regulation of the Satellite Channels including Direct-to-Home Services.

I.T.D.C. Hotels/Motels in Karnataka

971. SHRI S.D.N.R. WADIYAR : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of I.T.D.C. Hotels and Motels in Karnataka;

(b) the details of I.T.D.C. Hotels in Bangalore and Mysore Cities;

(c) whether Lalitha Mahal is a Hotel managed by I.T.D.C. in Mysore;

(d) if so, when it was started and whether the existing building is owned by the Union Government; and

(e) if so, the details of the acquisition of the above building?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA) : (a) I.T.D.C. is operating three hotels in Karnataka as under :

1. Hotel Ashok, Bangalore
2. Hotel Hassan Ashok, Hassan.
3. Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel, Mysore.

(b) The details of ITDC hotels in Bangalore and Mysore Cities are given below :

Name of Unit	Star Category	Capacity	
		Rooms	Beds
1. Hotel Ashok, Bangalore	5 star	11	362
2. Hotel Mahal Palace Hotel, Mysore	5 star	54	108

(c) to (e). Yes, Sir. ITDC is operating Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel in Mysore. The Palace property consisting of the main Palace, other buildings and gardens in the premises was taken over on lease for a period of 50 years. The Palace was converted into a hotel and commissioned in Sept. 1974.

Survey for Bidar-Hospet Railway Line

972. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken up any survey for laying of a new railway line between Bidar and Hospet via Kalburgi, Jevargi, Shahapur and Sorapur;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the time by which the above work is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The survey has been included in the Budget, 1997-98. The survey work will be taken up, once the Budget is passed.

(c) Does not arise.

Illegal Gratification

973. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum has pulled up the Chief General Manager, MTNL, for ignoring complaints of "illegal gratification" by the linemen for restoring telephones;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) whether complaints lodged with 198 are not attended to promptly relating to faulty telephone apparatus; and

(e) if so, the complaints pending in this regard in the South-I district of MTNL and the reasons for not replacing the faulty telephone apparatus?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (c). No Sir. However, in a case of Shri M.P. Rajbanshi, the Forum has directed by endorsing copy of the Judgement Order to the CGM, MTNL for compliance. Besides compensation of Rs. 2000/- as damages and rent rebate for 27 days, MTNL has been asked to enquire into the allegations made by subscriber and report by 3.3.97. An appeal has been filed with the State Commission by MTNL which has been listed for hearing on 20.3.97. The matter being subjudice no further comments can be offered at this stage.

(d) No, Sir. They are attended to promptly.

(e) No complaint on 198 relating to faulty telephone apparatus is pending in South-I District of MTNL.

Iron Ore

974. SHRI PUNNU LAL MOHLE : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the names of districts in Madhya Pradesh where iron-ore is mined and the number of workers employed in this work in each district;

(b) the production capacity of 'Sponge Iron, Vilaspur' and whether this company has been set up on Government's land or private land;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the said company gives priority to local people in employment; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) As per information received from the Indian Bureau of Mines, Nagpur, iron ore was mined in three districts of Madhya Pradesh, viz., Bastar, Durg and Jabalpur, the average daily employment in each district being 2403, 9116 and 54 respectively during 1995-96.

(b) There is no unit by the name 'Sponge Iron, Vilaspur'.

(c) to (e). Do not arise in view of reply at (b) above.